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APHIS

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Animal Care Industry Report

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

As you have probably heard, the Federal Government's Animal Care (AC) program, administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), has undergone many changes in recent months. AC has changed its organizational structure and management team, launched a new strategic direction, and initiated several regulatory projects. I firmly believe these changes will ultimately benefit you and our other stakeholders, and I am pleased to inform you about these developments in this, our first ever, APHIS-AC Industry Report.

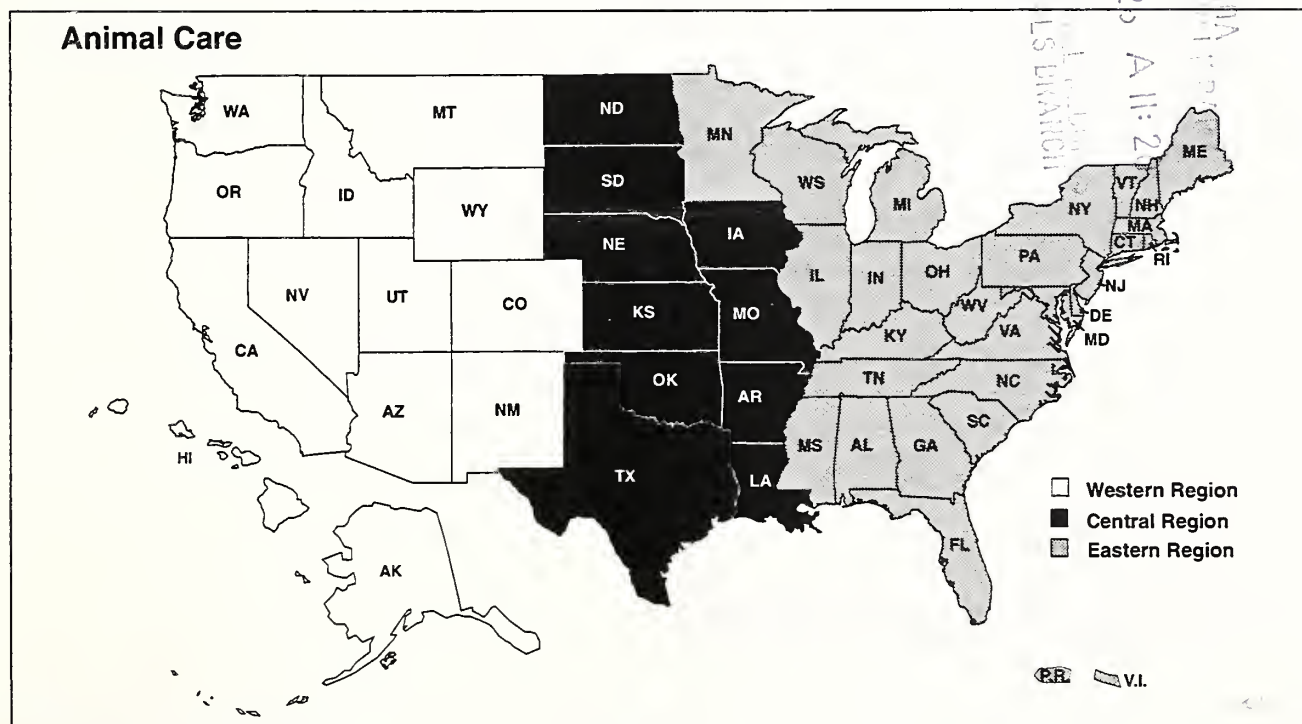
We envision this report promoting two-way communication between the Federal sector and representatives of key industry and interest groups like you. Through this short and direct format, we will provide you with summaries of emerging issues, reports on new and existing programs, and updates on AC initiatives and proposed regulations affecting your organizations. We would appreciate knowing if you find this information tool helpful, and we welcome your comments. Please call (301) 734-5175 to share your ideas.

W. Ron DeHaven
Acting Deputy Administrator
Animal Care

The Birth of AC: A New Organizational Structure

In the past year, AC has undergone a major reorganization that affected both AC as a whole and its regional offices. The whole of Animal Care was reorganized on October 1, 1996, when the former Regulatory Enforcement and Animal Care (REAC) unit was dissolved. APHIS' regulatory enforcement activities moved to another agency unit, and Animal Care was born. Investigative and Enforcement Services (IES)—the new name for the agency's regulatory enforcement unit—continues to provide excellent support to all APHIS programs, including AC on Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and Horse Protection Act (HPA) cases.

As for the regional offices, they have been reduced from four to three: the Eastern Region in Annapolis, MD, Central Region in Ft. Worth, TX, and Western Region in Sacramento, CA. The regional map in this report shows the new structure, and the shadowbox provides the names, addresses, and phone numbers of key contacts.



A New Management Team

AC also has a new and energetic management team. This team is lead by Dr. W. Ron DeHaven, the current Acting Deputy Administrator. DeHaven was head of AC's Western Sector Office from 1988 until his move to AC Headquarters in November 1996. He is a driving force behind the many changes currently going on in the AC program.

Supporting DeHaven are three new regional directors: Dr. Elizabeth Goldentyre in the Eastern Region, Dr. Walter Christensen in the Central Region, and Dr. Robert Gibbens in the Western Region. Gibbens was formerly a supervisory official in the old AC Western Sector office, Goldentyre was a supervisor in the Southeast, and Christensen was head of the former Central Sector office. All are veterinarians with many years of experience with AC and extensive knowledge regarding the AWA and HPA.

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Roadmap to the Future: AC's New Strategic Direction

In April 1996, AC took a major step toward improving program delivery. With the report entitled *The Strategic Direction for the Animal Care Program*, AC officials charted a clear course for the future. They then immediately established work teams of field employees to make each component in the strategic direction "roadmap" a reality.

- *Internal and external training* is developing training and outreach programs for AC inspectors and AWA licensees and registrants, respectively.
- *Horse protection* is improving all aspects of HPA enforcement and compliance through, among other things, working with industry groups to incorporate commonly accepted veterinary medical practices into the HPA inspection protocol.
- *Program results monitoring* is measuring service delivery and customer satisfaction and identifying areas for improvement.
- *Animal Care management* is monitoring overall program operations throughout the country and identifying areas for increasing efficiency and effectiveness.
- *Revised inspection procedures* is identifying areas for changing and improving existing inspection methods.
- *Regulation, act, and policy* is identifying areas where the existing laws, regulations, and policies can be modified to enhance program delivery and enforcement.
- *Animal Care manual* is revising the AC policy manual and developing a "how to" manual for field inspectors.
- *Computer oversight* is identifying ways to improve AC's program delivery and administration through greater use of technology and information systems.

Strategic Direction Accomplishments

Together, these nine teams are already advancing AC's strategic direction and improving the overall performance of the program. In fact, they can point to many specific accomplishments. Consider these four examples:

A national training program for AC employees was conducted in Riverdale, MD, in April 1996. This was the first time that the 90 AC field and headquarters employees had come together in one location. Participants noted that the training session was an excellent means of promoting national program uniformity and fostering new ideas.

A strategic plan for the horse protection program has been drafted and is currently under departmental review. In developing the plan, AC conducted three public forums last summer and held a meeting for all horse protection veterinary medical officers in December 1996 to gather input. To improve HPA enforcement immediately, AC also conducted the first of six industry training sessions in Vancouver, WA. Additional sessions are scheduled for the Central and Southeastern United States.

A proposed model for risk-based inspection has been developed and will be field tested in the summer of 1997. The model is designed to utilize AC's resources more effectively by increasing the focus on licensees and registrants who have historically had AWA compliance problems and decreasing the focus on those with good track records. We will keep you posted following these field tests.

A voluntary merit program, through which licensees and registrants can seek an honorary designation for consistently exceeding the AWA requirements, has been developed and field tested. The licensees that participated in the field tests voiced support for the program. AC officials are currently revising the program based on the tests.

Several other projects have already been launched, with more to follow. For more information on AC's strategic direction initiatives, contact Dr. Richard Watkins at (301) 734-7712.

Customer Service Survey

On February 14, AC mailed a customer service survey to about 3,700 randomly selected facilities licensed or registered under the AWA. The survey is part of AC's efforts under the Government Performance and Results Act to measure its success in assuring the well-being of AWA-regulated animals. It is one of several measurement tools the AC program will be using in the future. Responses to the survey were due March 15. We hope all of you who received the survey were able to complete the questionnaire and return it to us.

Putting the "High" in Priority

While the length of time it takes to prosecute cases of alleged AWA violations has been reduced significantly in recent months, some situations warrant even faster action. To help field, regional, and headquarters personnel better prioritize AWA cases, AC, in coordination with IES, has issued a list of criteria for determining when to give priority handling to alleged violations of the AWA. AC and IES employees may recommend to the AC regional director that a case be considered a high priority based on the following:

- Severity of animal suffering (death or severe injury).
- Past compliance history of facility.
- Potential public safety or health concerns.
- Abusive or potentially violent nature of licensee or registrant.
- Type of facility and species of animal involved.
- Media, public, or animal protection group interest.

If the need arises, it is never too late to designate an AWA case as "high priority."

AC Jumps on the Electronic Superhighway

AC now has a site on the World Wide Web. This site (<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ac>) provides information on the AWA regulations, a list of available AC publications, and much more. It is also linked to numerous other sites of organizations involved in animal care and well-being. Last summer, AC's missing pets page—a part of the web site developed by an AC headquarters employee—was acclaimed for the important service it provides pet owners. We encourage you to come visit AC's site.

Regional News

Earlier this year, AC participated in Marketplace '97 at the Bismarck, ND, Civic Center. Marketplace '97 is a daylong exposition designed to provide people from rural North Dakota with ideas and resources they can use to boost family income and bring economic development to their communities. In cooperation with the North Dakota Department of Agriculture, AC presented an hour-long workshop called "Health and Well Being Concerns for Wild, Exotic, Exhibit, and Entertainment Animals and Dog and Cat Breeders." AC employees also staffed a booth in the exhibition hall.

In late January, AC took part in the Missouri chapter of the American Veterinary Medical Association's annual conference in Osage. AC provided an educational exhibit at the conference that was stocked with informational handouts and photos and staffed by two AC veterinary medical officers. More than 400 veterinarians and veterinary students visited the exhibit.

New Policy Covers "Pocket Pets"

What do glider squirrels, prairie dogs, jerboa, and the spiny mouse have in common? When sold as pets, these exotic and/or wild animals are protected under the Animal Welfare Act. USDA is now regulating retail dealers who sell small exotic animals or "pocket pets." Retail stores that sell small exotic animals as pets will be licensed as class "B" dealers and must pass a preclicensing inspection. Followup inspections of these facilities will be conducted on a complaint-driven basis with a minimum of one inspection every 3 years.

Regulatory Initiatives

The following AWA dockets are currently being developed or reviewed:

Notices

- Petition on hunting, security, and breeding dogs from the Doris Day Animal League
- Information Collection: Marine Mammal Facilities

Advance Notices of Proposed Rulemaking

- Handling and Training of Potentially Dangerous Wild and Exotic Animals Used for Exhibition

Proposed Rules

- Perimeter Fencing
- Standards for Animal Auctions
- Exotic Canids and Felids: Minimum Age for Transport
- Standards for Farm Animals
- Standards for Marine Mammals
- User Fees: REAC and Biotechnology, Biologics and Environmental Protection
- Importation of Dead Animals
- Humane Treatment of Dogs and Cats: Licensing and Consignment

Final Rules

- Humane Treatment of Dogs and Cats: Wire Flooring
- Humane Treatment of Dogs and Cats: Tethering
- Humane Treatment for Dogs and Cats: Temperature
- Swim-With-the-Dolphins Human Interactive Programs